

exceeding richness, and acres of dazzling salt. It has very few boats, and none suited for passenger traffic. Its waters are so salt that fish cannot live in them.

The antiquarian interests of Urmi consist in the semi-subterranean Syrian church of Mart-Mariam, said to have been built by the Magi on their return from Bethlehem!

a tower and mosque of Arab architecture seven centuries old, and some great mounds outside the walls, from sixty to one hundred feet in height, composed entirely of ashes, marking the site of the altars at which the rites of one of the purest of the ancient faiths were celebrated. As the birthplace of Zoroaster, and for several subsequent ages the sacred city of the Fire Worshippers and the scene of the restoration of the Mithraic rites, Urmi must always remain interesting.

The Christian population of the city is not very large, though it is estimated that there are 20,000 Syrian Christians in the villages of the plain. The city Syrians are mostly well-to-do people, who have come into Urmi to practise trades. The best carpenters, as well as the best photographers and tailors, are Syrians, and though in times past the Moslems refused to buy from the Christians on the ground that things made by them are unclean, the prejudice is passing away.

There is a deputy-governor called the *Serperast*, whose duty it is to deal with the Christians. The office seems to have been instituted for their protection at the instigation of the British Government, but the Europeans regard it

simply as a means of oppression and
extortion, and desire
its abolition. Canon Maclean goes so far as to
say, "The
multiplication of judges in Persia means the
multiplica-
tion of injustice, and of the number of
persons who can
extort money from the unfortunate people."
The *Ser-*
perast depends chiefly for his living and for
keeping up a
staff of servants on what he can get out of
the Christians